DEC STD 112-0 Standard Date Format for Output

DOCUMENT IDENTIFIER: A-DS-EL00112-00-0000 Rev C1, 29-Jun-1990

ABSTRACT: This standard ensures an unambiguous interpretation of dates by readers around the world. This format is one which is in common use throughout most of the world, is reasonably terse, is well human-engineered, and is easy to produce in any computer system.

APPLICABILITY: This standard applies to all DEC software and to all memos, letters, and documents. This standard does not apply to outputting dates that are constrained to some other format by an end user specification. It is acceptable to implement optional alternate formats of output if needed; however, the normal default format should conform to this standard. This standard does not apply to dates that are output in machine-readable form for input to another program; these would typically conform to ANSI X3.30-1971, Representation of Calendar Date and Ordinal Date for Information Interchange for ease of sorting.

STATUS: APPROVED 29-Jun-1990; use VTX SMC for current status.

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APPROVAL: This document has been reviewed and recommended for approval by the General Review group for its category. Rev C1 incorporates clerical changes only.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this standard is to ensure unambiguous interpretation of dates in all DEC-produced software and DEC software produced documents. As an additional benefit, consistency of output, and identification of the date as such will minimize the chance of misinterpreting the date.

2 DEFINITION OF THE STANDARD

2.1 THE STANDARD

2.1.1 Representation of the Month

The month must be represented by either the first three letters of its English name or by its full English name. The first character must be capitalized. It is preferred, but not required, that the remainder be in lower case. Any given product must be consistent as to whether it outputs the month in its full spelling, or as a 3-letter abbreviation.

2.1.2 Representation of the Year

The year must always be represented by either a 2-digit or a 4-digit decimal number. The two digit form is allowable only when it is unambiguous as to the century implied and when the month has been abbreviated. If the month is given in full, then the year must be given as four digits. Note that if the year is abbreviated to two digits, a leading zero, if any, must be preserved.

2.1.3 Representation of the Day of Month

The day of the month must be given as a one or two digit decimal number. It is preferred, but not required, that a leading zero be suppressed or converted to a space.

2.1.4 Representation of the Date

Only the following three formats are allowed for the date

1. day-month-year—valid representations for Friday, the fourth day of January, 1974, are:

   4-Jan-74
   04-Jan-74
   4-JAN-74
   04-JAN-74
   4-January-1974
   04-Jan-1974

2. day month year—valid representations are:

   4 January 1974
   4 JAN 74

3. month day, year—valid representations are:

   January 4, 1974

The latter two formats require the month and year to be spelled out in full. The first format is the preferred format for computer program output which is not constrained by other considerations. The second format is preferred for memos and letters which do not follow the first format.

2.1.5 Invalid Representation of the Date

Invalid representations for the date Friday, the fourth day of January, 1974 are:

1/4
1/4/74
4/1
1-4-74
4-1-74
Jan 4
4 Jan
4-January-74 (abbreviated year)
4-Ja-74 (too short month)
4-Januar-74 (abbreviation not three letters)
74.1.4. (ISO standard)
74.Jan.4 (ISO)
4/1.74 (European)

2.2 SUGGESTIONS

A given system should select one representation and use it in all places unless external constraints (such as specific end user functional requirements) require another format. The preferred format is three letter month with only the first letter capitalized, two digit year, leading zero suppressed on day, and the pattern day-month-year.

3 RELATED CURRENT STANDARDS

American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has standardized the format of the date for information interchange (X3.30-1971, *Representation of Calendar Date and Ordinal Date for Information Interchange*), but this is hard for humans to read since it is a string of up to eight digits without punctuation. In addition, it does not conform to any common human conventions in use in any major region.

International Organization for Standardization (ISO) has also adopted a standard similar to the ANSI standard. This standard allows dots to separate the components, but also rules that the year be first. Although this is an improvement over the ANSI constraints, it still results in a pattern which is strange and unfamiliar to most readers. Since computers should not appear strange, this would be a poor choice for a standard.

APPENDIX A REFERENCED DOCUMENTS

A.1 Other Documents

Document Number	Document Title
ANSI X3.30-1971	*Representation of Calendar Date and Ordinal Date for Information Interchange*

A.2 Ordering Information

Following are the sources for documents not available from Standards and Methods Control.

- ANSI, IEC, and ISO Documents
  American National Standards Institute (ANSI),
  1430 Broadway, New York, NY 10018,
  Telephone (212) 354-3300 x479

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